The Vestryman

CALVIN P. SWANK

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THE VESTRYMAN

A Handbook for Church Officers

By

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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FOREWORD

This little book is intended to be a treatise on the stewardship of the privileges and responsibilities of the office of a vestryman.

In writing these pages, the author has kept before him that host of consecrated men, who as officers, sincerely desire to magnify their office by the most intelligent and efficient service possible. To encourage and assist these servants of Christ is our sincere and prayerful purpose.

It has been the custom in the Lutheran Church for congregations to use the term "council" to designate their official bodies. Instead we are using the term "vestry" in this treatise, for reasons appearing on following pages. This is not in criticism of past usage, but to add distinction and ecclesiastical

dignity to the office. In this exchange of terms there is no thought of change in character or function of service: it is simply an interchange of terms.

1

THE OFFICE OF VESTRYMAN

1

HISTORY OF THE OFFICE

In the Apostolic Church (Acts 6: 1-6)

When the number of believers in Christ was multiplying, some complained that the widows were not receiving proper consideration. Realizing that they could not attend to everything, the Twelve called the believers together and explained to them that the teaching of the Word of God was far too important for them to neglect it. They proposed that the believers select from their number seven men of "good report and full of the Spirit and of wisdom," to attend to the more material matters.

This recommendation met with hearty approval and while the Twelve "continued steadfast in prayer," their

fellow believers chose seven men, first and chief among whom was Stephen, who for his great consecration and influence was soon arrested by the Jews and stoned to death. Upon these seven men, after prayer, the Twelve laid their hands in consecration. This was the first church vestry and they were called Deacons.

A little later, as the number of believers increased, it was necessary for the Apostles to organize the different groups of believers. There was then need of elders, or presbyters as they are sometimes called. Their duties, as Paul tells Timothy (I Timothy 3 and Titus 1), were to "feed the flock." This was the command of Jesus to Peter (John 21:15). Those who fed the flock, that is taught, admonished, and administered the Sacraments, corresponded to our pastors.* "Bishops" were pastors who had oversight over

*Blondel, a noted Presbyterian authority, in "The Theory of the Ruling Elder."

several congregations. There were, then, the two classes, "pastors" and "deacons," in the later Apostolic Church.

This system of deacons inaugurated a system of ministerial service and assistance that has continued ever since. Those who now, by sacred election, are called to this holy office are successors to this first noble group in a task of ministry that will never be completed while widows and orphans remain but which grows more beautiful and blessed with accumulated years.

In the Post-Apostolic Church

The deacons of the Apostolic Church did more than attend to temporal affairs. They taught and even baptized (Acts 6:10 and 8:5, 38). In the *Apostolic Constitutions,* the deacons assisted the bishop (minister), supervised the church property, managed finances and visited the sick. Their duties are summed up by saying that they should

be the eye, ear and even heart of the bishop. By tradition their number was limited to seven.

The Church Fathers, Clement (cir. 120 A. D.), Ignatius (cir. 100 A. D.), and Polycarp (cir. 150 A. D.), speak of the usefulness of lay officers in the congregation. St. Augustine (395 A. D.) also writes of the services of church officers. Isidore of Seville (600-636 A. D.), giving instruction to pastors, says: "The seniors of the people (undoubtedly the lay officers) are to be taught first, that by them such as are placed under them may be more easily instructed."

"The office of deacon has been preserved in the Eastern Church with but little modification." But with the organization of the Roman, or Western Church, there developed a change. It became an "order" rather than a service. The diaconate was the lowest of three orders, already practiced in Syria and Asia Minor.

In the European Church

There is a dearth of historic material concerning vestry service from about the seventh to the twelfth centuries. This was due to two causes, (a) the perfection of an exclusive priesthood, and (b) development of a system of monastic life. The diaconate became an "order" for those who desired Christian service for life, but who could not enter the priesthood. The Anglican Church has largely retained this order.*

The Bohemian Church, of which the leaders were Boleslaus II (967 A.D.) and Stephen (997-1038 A.D.), had a system of lay service, or vestry, in the congregation. This was adopted by the Waldensian Church under the leadership of Peter Waldo (cir. 1170 A. D.) about a century later. John Huss (1369-1415 A. D.) made use of lay service, corresponding to our vestry, in the Bohemian churches. John Calvin

* The Prayer Book Dictionary.

(1509-1564 A. D.), supposed to be the establisher of the system of eldership in the Presbyterian Church, found a system of vestry service already in practice by Zwingli (died 1531 A. D.)

Throughout the pre-reformation period wherever the light of true evangelicalism appears, there is evidence of vestry service. But the Reformation, bringing a new conception of Christian ideals, brought with it an emphasis for lay activity. The absence of a papal form of church government gave more or less independence to the congregation and necessitated a local church government. This returned the church to its primitive apostolic custom of lay service. Luther's desire was to give even a larger place to diaconate service than appeared at that time practicable. With the lapse of two centuries, this desire materialized by the ordination of thousands of lay Inner Mission workers and sending them through Germany and into other parts of the world.

In the Modern Church

In the Anglican Church the deacon must be twenty-three years of age. He has the privilege of pastoral work, preaching and baptizing. He may even read a part of the service, but in England he may not hold a parish. To this office he was especially ordained by the placing of the stole, the delivery to him of the book of the Gospels and the laying on of the bishop's hands.*

In the Methodist Episcopal Church the deacon is a member of an order of the ministry next below the elder.† There was a revival of use of the term "elder" following the Reformation. On the continent there was some regulation of the civil law with reference to the election and functions of elders. They were usually chosen for life. In the Baptist Church the term was especially applied to evangelists and missionaries. In Presbyterian Churches the pastor

* International Encyclopedia.
† See "Elders" on page 22.

was spoken of as "teaching elder" to distinguish him from the "ruling elders," who are selected to assist the pastor in the oversight and government of the church.

Deacons are elected by an annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and ordained by the bishop presiding. They may assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper, baptize, marry and serve as traveling preachers. In the Congregational and Baptist churches deacons are elected to assist in the administration of the Communion, advise with the pastor and look after the charities of the church. Their election and function are similar in the Presbyterian Church. In the Roman Church the office at the present time is of but little more importance than as a step to the priesthood.

In American Lutheran Church

The early American Lutheran congregational constitutions were patterned

after the one prepared by Dr. Muhlenberg for St. Michael's congregation in Philadelphia in 1762. It was the outgrowth of experience, and patterned somewhat after St. Mary's Savoy Church, London, which in turn was a revision of that of Amsterdam; the constitution of the Georgia congregation; the constitution of the Swedish churches in Pennsylvania and Delaware, which were modeled after the Dutch church in New York; and Muhlenberg's own experience in the Dutch church of New York in 1751-2.*

Prior to the constitution of 1762 in St. Michael's, the pastor, Rev. Brunnholtz, appointed twelve elders. These in turn elected four deacons. The congregation complained that it had no representation and in 1750 Muhlenberg prepared a constitution for the Trappe congregation by which the entire council was elected by the congregation.

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* "History of Lutherans"—H. E. Jacobs.

Later the council of St. Michael's consisted of fourteen trustees, six elders, and six deacons. In 1791 provision was made for a council consisting of pastor, elders and deacons. Trustees were omitted. The original trustees were continued for life and all others to be elected every three years. The council would meet the day before election and nominate three times the number to be elected. In case one declined he was expected to pay "a considerable donation" into the treasury.*

Classes of Officers in Early American Lutheran Church

The early American Lutheran Church therefore had three classes of laymen in its vestry. They were known as Elders, Deacons and Trustees. This same classification obtains in many churches. In a general way, their duties were as follows:

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* "History of Lutherans"—H. E. Jacobs.

Elders were usually selected from the older and more spiritually inclined men. They gave direction and oversight to the spiritual program of the church.

Deacons were generally selected from the younger and more active laymen and attended to the material side of the church.

Trustees. The term "trustee" is distinctively an American term and arose from the necessity of taking title to and holding property. This was then done in the name of individuals instead of the congregation.

In 1731 the Colonial Assembly of Pennsylvania passed an act giving religious societies legal capacity for holding property. This provided for a system of conveying title to trustees for the society. The Courts have said, "The use of the medium of trustees was a mere matter of form. . . . Such trustees seldom, if ever, convey to their successors; but title in their name is treated as the title of the congregation,

to be used by the congregation at their discretion, for such purposes as the law allows."

"Following the act of 1731 there were numerous more recent statutes giving religious societies power to take and hold real estate. The general incorporation act of 1874 authorized the formation of corporations of the first class for charitable purposes. This enables religious corporations to take title in the incorporated body's name." The office of trustee has continued though not with the same necessity, with the function of looking after the property and its repairs.

These arrangements were ideal for their day and still obtain in some places. But in highly developed city churches, it is recommended by the United Lutheran Church that there be but one classification, known as Deacons. This makes it possible to elect the best men of the congregation irrespective of their abilities. Also to organize the

Vestry into committees for a larger service, which modern church life requires, and such as was not demanded in the days of the older system.

2

QUALIFICATIONS OF VESTRYMEN

His Person

It would be impossible to exhaust the list of virtuous qualifications that can and ought to be used to advantage by a vestryman. An attempted list might frighten the best of men. But it should be a source of joy to all that whatever the qualifications, or lack of them, may be, only one is really essential and this is within the reach of any man.

The one outstanding qualification of a vestryman, without which his service cannot be acceptable, is a devout and sincere Christian life. No other qualifications may be substituted for this. He may be efficient in business, willing

in service, generous in giving, resourceful and reliable, but if he be not of a devout and sincere Christian life he is unqualified for this holy office. Yet if a man sincerely tries to live a worthy Christian life, though he may have no other apparent qualifications, he is fitted for the office.

On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the errant and delinquent, who neither support the church nor commune, have no place in the vestry. Such delinquency is a breach of their Christian covenant and an unfaithfulness to the Sacraments of the Church. The presence of such men in the vestry would deter the spiritual progress of the congregation. The vestry is not a reformatory, but a place of sacred and holy council. Every man should be of spiritual mind and pious heart.

His Principles

The qualifications for the first deacons were that they should be of "honest re-

port, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," (Acts 6:3). Paul admonished Timothy as follows: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own house well" (I Timothy 3:8-12).

It is Christian faith and piety that constitute the human side of the church. Without these it would be but little more than any business or fraternal group. Nor could it be possible to please the Great Head of the church without holiness of life in its officers, who are the leaders standing between the minister and the congregation. There is no position, aside from the ministry, in

which a good example is so influential and impressive. The vestryman is in the public eye, and in piety and practice should be worthy of congregational confidence. In the village church where the officers sat in front pews, it was the ambition of the boys so to live as to be like these men and some day take their places. What a privilege to be of such influence!

His Practice

A vestryman should be trustworthy toward the minister. The minister must often confide principles and plans to his vestrymen. A vestryman should be worthy of such confidence. If he should differ with the minister in certain opinions, he should be brotherly, courteous and frank in his presence. But when the minister is absent, he has no privilege as a Christian and especially as an officer, to criticize or air his differences. He does not surrender his individuality, but he does surrender

the right to nullify or undermine a minister's instruction or influence.

A vestryman should also be trustworthy toward the congregation of which he is a part and which he is serving. Personal pleasures, profits and opinions should always be in the direction of the good of the Kingdom.

His Purposes

A vestryman should strive to cultivate at least three purposes. These purposes will be conducive to great satisfaction to himself and of immeasurable benefit to the trust committed to him by his brethren.

(1) A purpose to dominate his life by Christ's principles and power.

. (2) A purpose to see God in the material things of life and glorify Him by their use.

(3) A purpose to help bless men and women everywhere with Christian salvation.

II

THE CALL OF VESTRYMEN

1

VESTRYMEN CALLED OF GOD

The selection and election of vestrymen, through the constituted channels of the congregation, is a call of God. As is the minister, so is the vestryman called. He is chosen as was Moses, Joshua, or even the early Christian deacons. It is a call of God in that it is the selection of praying, godly people. It is done by the church, a divine institution. The church has a right to select the best, and perchance the busiest men, to fill its positions of trust. Nor should any man feel that occupation in any secular engagement, however important it may appear, is a just or adequate reason for declining this honor.

The election to the position of vestry-

man is a call of God. It is a divine work and should supersede every human or material interest. It is the call of Christian believers to look after Christian interests. When the call comes, we should respond as did the boy Samuel, "Here am I, Lord." By our simplicity we show our greatness.

2

THE OFFICE OF VESTRYMEN A GREAT HONOR

It is not possible at first thought to fully appraise the honor attached to this office. In many churches the duties appear to be matter-of-fact and menial. Consequently the office is often considered ordinary, even undesirable. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). These words of God to Peter concerning his food may well be applied to His service. Inasmuch as it is a service in the cause of the Son of God, our Saviour, and for the spread of His Kingdom through the ministry and agencies of the gospel, it should be considered a supreme privilege. The more elevated the cause we serve, the nobler is the servant and the more complete his joy.

The office carries with it the respect and confidence of Christian people, who represent the best in thought and character of the community. The ones whom they elevate to positions in the sacred things of their religion may justly feel a sense of honor as well as the responsibility for the magnifying of their office.

3

ORDER FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A CHURCH COUNCIL

[This Order, with its rubrics (directions), is copied from the *Common Service Book* of the United Lutheran Church.]

¶ *The* Order for the Installation of a Church Council *may be used at* The Service *or at* Vespers.

¶ *When used at* The Service, *it shall follow the* General Prayer (*the* Lord's Prayer *being omitted*) *and conclude with a* Hymn *and the* Benediction.

¶ *When used at* Vespers, *it shall follow the* Hymn *after the* Address, *and conclude with a* Hymn, *after which shall*

be said the Collects, *the* Benedicamus *and the* Benediction.

¶ *The Minister shall announce the names of those who have been elected to office, and they shall then present themselves before the Altar.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister say:*

DEAR Brethren: Hear what the Word of God saith concerning the institution of the office to which you have been called:

THEN the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

HEAR the duties of the office to which you have been elected by this Congregation.

It will be your duty to see: That the services of God's House be held at the proper times, and conducted in accordance with the Order of the Church; that the pure Word of God be preached, as the Church confesses it, and only by those duly authorized according to the Constitution of this Congregation; that provision be made for the Christian instruction of the young; that strict discipline be maintained, the erring admonished and impenitent offenders excluded from the communion of the Church; that the property of the Congregation be cared for, and all that relates to its worldly affairs properly administered.

It will furthermore be your duty: To assist the Pastor in the care of the sick and needy, in the cultivation of harmony among the members, in the promotion of the general welfare of the

Congregation, and in the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom, at home and abroad.

Nor should you be unmindful that, while holiness of life and conversation is required of all who name the Name of Christ, it is especially incumbent upon those who have been called to be office-bearers in His Church to show themselves in all things, by word and example, a pattern of good works.

I ASK you, therefore: Do you accept the office to which you have been called, and do you promise to discharge its duties faithfully, in the fear of God, and in accordance with the Constitution of this Congregation, and the principles and usages of the Church?

¶ *Then shall the Officers-elect answer:*
Yes, by the help of God.

¶ *Then the Minister, taking the right hand of each one, shall say:*

ALMIGHTY God, our Heavenly Father, Who hath called you to the

service of His Church, enlighten and strengthen you in your office, that you may prove a good and faithful steward, to the glory of His holy Name. Amen.

¶ *Then shall the Minister say:*
Let us pray.

LORD God, Heavenly Father, who according to Thy gracious will, hast established within Thy Church on earth, besides the Ministry of the Word, other offices for the ministration of Thy manifold gifts of grace: We thank Thee that, in this place, Thou hast provided men of honest report, ready to serve this Congregation for Thy sake; and we humbly pray Thee to enrich them abundantly with Thy Holy Spirit, that they may have wisdom and strength for the service unto which Thou hast called them. Let Thy blessing rest also on this Congregation, not only in that which pertaineth to its temporal affairs, but, above all, in spiritual and heavenly gifts. Strengthen the

faith, quicken the love and enkindle the zeal of its members, that Thy Name may be glorified, and that, both here and in all places, the Kingdom of Thy dear Son may be advanced; through Whom we pray:

¶ *Then shall all say:*

OUR Father, Who art in heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

¶ *Then shall the Minister say:*

THEREFORE be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Amen.

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4

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTALLATION

Custom of the Church

A vestryman is not "in office" until he is installed. His word of acceptance to the minister is not sufficient. It must be given before the congregation. Most church constitutions are so worded that officers serve until their successors are not only elected, but duly installed.

It is the custom of the church to induct its vestry into office in the presence of the congregation which elects them and for whom they serve. This may take place at any public service, but is particularly appropriate at the Lord's Day worship. It is the custom in some congregations, when the newly elected officers come to the altar, for

the whole vestry to come. The experienced officers do not answer the questions of acceptance; but by their presence, they symbolize the fraternity of their official body, and subject themselves to the beneficent influence of the prayers both of minister and congregation.

Authority of Scripture

The office to which the vestryman is being elevated is holy and therefore requires that his induction should be at a sacred service. The seven deacons upon whom the hands of the Apostles were laid in solemn dedication, were "set apart" at a divine service in the presence of the brethren. It is a solemn moment when men of God, who have been called by a formal election of Christian believers, stand before the altar and in prayerful reverence assume their sacred obligations. The service of installation is the ecclesiastical act by which the church receives the

vow of men whom it is now commissioning to be its spokesmen and representatives. The holiness of the office and the sacredness of their call, together with its scriptural example, require that vestrymen should be installed in the presence of the worshipping congregation.

Nature of the Obligation

His obligation is made to the congregation in the presence of God. While the minister addresses the questions, he does it as a representative of Christ, the Head of the church. The same is true of persons received into membership in the congregation. This removes the personal element. No officer can come to the minister and be excused from his duties. The minister has no authority to excuse or exonerate. He, in a sense, is merely a witness.

In the event of a vestryman becoming unfaithful to his obligation, he should, after prayerful and Christian

discussion of the matter with the minister and the vestry, be required to relinquish his office. His successor should then be chosen. Faithlessness to duty is a bona fide evidence of errancy and subjects the offender to the discipline of the church.

There may be instances when a vestryman desires to retire from his office. This should be done only after a prayerful consideration of the matter; when he is convinced that his reasons are satisfactory to God, Who only can excuse him. His successor may then be chosen.

5

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SERVICE OF INSTALLATION

The Order for Installation consists of the following features:

I. The scriptural authority for the office.
II. The scriptural duties enjoined by the church.
III. The acceptance.
IV. The acknowledgment.
V. The prayers.
VI. The commission.

The reason for and importance of each may be seen in the following:

I. The Scripture here quoted is Acts 6:1-6, which describes both the necessity for the kind of service needed and

the character of the men required to serve. The newly elected vestryman is now impressed with the apostolic character of his office and the demand for a man of "good report" and "full of the Spirit." He is not simply entering upon a custom of the church but entering the line of an apostolic succession of service. The authority for his call is divine and apostolic as well as of local necessity.

II. The duties enjoined as enumerated in the service are from the direct command of our Lord when He said to His disciples, "Preach the gospel," (Matthew 28: 19) and to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21: 16). They are also in harmony with apostolic practice in the selection of the seven deacons (Acts 6: 1-6), that the apostles might give themselves exclusively to the preaching of the Word. It is also Paul's instruction to Timothy to "preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season," (II Timothy 4: 2).

The preaching of the gospel, with the administration of its sacraments, is the important thing and all the duties of the vestry center about it. It is this that brings the minister into prominence and the vestry as his assistants and undershepherds.

But the church of today is far more elaborate than in the days of the Apostles. Then there were no buildings owned by the congregation, nor complexity of organization. Nor were salaries paid: life was simple and living could be earned by other means. In addition to caring for the widows and orphans of their day, many duties are required now. These are far-reaching both in character and importance. Withal it is a high and holy service into which the vestryman here enters. Well may he feel the command of God to Moses, "Take thy shoes from off thy feet for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:2). While it is practically impossible to

make any distinction as to the relative importance of these duties, for the sake of analysis we have divided them as follows:

1. Duties incident to the ministry of the Word.
2. Duties incident to welfare of the congregation.
3. Duties incident to a good personal example.

Duties Incident to the Ministry of the Word

In these duties the vestrymen assist the minister and regale themselves with the distinction of being the guardians of the sanctuary; its worship; its instruction; its property.

The ministry of the Word, with the sacraments, is central to, and the necessity for the "Services of God's House . . . . conducted in accordance with the Order of the Church; that the pure Word of God be preached as the Church confesses it, and only by

those authorized according to the Constitution of the Congregation." This is the very life of the church and offers the vestryman a position of great honor. He stands next to the minister in the performance of his duties, and with him in diligently preserving the sacred privileges of pure worship for the congregation. While he may not be trained for the performance of ministerial services as the minister, he should have the same spiritual solicitude for their successful promotion.

In this particular phase of a vestryman's service, he will find it a necessary privilege to magnify the office of the ministry. The more careful he is in this the greater becomes the honor of his own office and the greater will be the influence of his church. To be flippant or undignified in public conduct toward his minister discounts his own office and the sacred influence of the minister.

The ministry of the Word must not

be permitted to suffer. For the support of this every vestryman should labor and pray. Its time and regularity and appointments should be his concern. To this end he should guard the health and happiness of his minister, whose illness or discomfort may soon interfere with the progress of the gospel.

Duties Incident to the Welfare of the Congregation

In assuming this responsibility, he does it not independent of, but under the instruction and supervision of, the pastor. The pastor is the head, the president, of the congregation. Without his advice and supervision, confliction and confusion would inevitably follow.

The duties here enumerated are to care for the sick and needy; to cultivate harmony among the members; and promote the general welfare of the congregation and further the Kingdom of Christ at home and abroad. This lat-

ter means promoting not only the local congregation's interests, but the whole benevolent program of the church, including its foreign missions. While the word "assist" occurs in the Order, the preoccupation of the minister in the more direct ministry of the Word will enable him to do but little more than give council and supervision. In this great program therefore he is to be the pastor's trusty and sympathetic spiritual co-partner.

While these duties appear very great for the conscientious officer, the pastor will always prove a willing and encouraging co-partner. With willing and pious hearts God's grace can accomplish wonders. Where there is sweet fraternity and the breath of prayer, great things are done easily and responsibilities are comfortably borne.

There is a general notion that the pastor's duty is to visit the homes of his congregation frequently or regularly. For this he was not ordained or

called by the congregation. His duties, aside from preaching and administrating the sacraments, are to look after the sick and needy, and promote the general interests of the Kingdom. He does, however, visit the homes of his congregation as often as possible, not because it is his duty but because he loves his people and is greatly interested in their personal and domestic welfare.

Duties Incident to Good Personal Example

Personal piety is of great importance, as has been emphasized elsewhere. But here the vestryman assumes it as an obligation. However, it should be a great privilege to be an example before fellow believers to the honor of our Lord. It is not required that an officer be able to pass an examination in scholarship or business administration; that he be weak or strong, rich or poor: only that he be sincere in his desire and

obedient to Christ's will, to see Him exalted in and through the church.

III. The acceptance of the above duties and responsibilities is not absolute, but to the extent of human ability. To the conscientious there may be the trembling of voice because of misgivings. Yet in the answer he says: "Yes, with the help of God." He is not alone. He becomes the instrument by which hungry souls are fed; the window through which the beauty of divine light shines.

Some may think the responsibilities too great and resign, or refuse election. But this does not excuse or lessen responsibility. As a member of the congregation, out of duty to his brethren and obligation to his Lord he should be of the greatest service possible. To refuse with any but conscientious reasons, is to interfere with the progress of the gospel and frustrate God's grace.

IV. The acknowledgment by the pastor of the officer's willingness is very

assuring. He extends the hand and in the grip of comradeship encourages him by saying that inasmuch as God has called him, He will also enlighten and strengthen him. This is a mingling of petition and promise: He both prays that He may, and is assured that God will, make him a good and faithful steward.

V. The Prayer contains sentiments that have graced the church through all its history. It is the acknowledging of God's grace in establishing the church; gratitude for Christian men ready to serve and a petition for divine strength and guidance upon vestrymen and congregation.

The Lord's Prayer follows. This is not alone because it is appropriate as a prayer, but also because it is the prayer of the church given by our Lord and should accompany all the official and sacramental acts of the church.

VI. The final word is from I Corinthians 15:58. In this remarkable

chapter Paul is speaking about the power of God to conquer both sin and death; that in Christ there is victory, though defeat be apparent. Here the officer is instructed to be faithful; that this mighty power of God will insure his labors against futility. As a general of Christ, the pastor commands the officer forward in the name and power of Him with Whom there can be no defeat.

III

THE SERVICE OF VESTRYMEN

1

CUSTOM AND PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH

As to Council

The term "council" is derived from the Greek word "synedros," which means "a sitting together." From this the name Sanhedrin has come. It was the council; the court of justice. There were two such bodies in Jerusalem: The one, composed of twenty-three members, and the supreme council composed of seventy-one members. The term "elder" was applied to an individual member of the Sanhedrin.

The term council has been applied by the church to the meetings of wider representation, as that of representing various congregations, states, nations,

etc. There are general councils representing nations and ecumenical councils representative of all sections of the church.

The term council, while not exactly descriptive of the nature of our congregational officers, falls into disfavor because of its general usage by all secular bodies. The dignity of the church demands a term expressive of its character.

As to Vestry

"The 'Vestry' is the council of the parish for ecclesiastical purposes. It was so called because its meetings were usually held in the vestry room of the church."* The term "vestry" comes from the room in the church building where the vestments of the clergymen and sanctuary paraments (draperies, etc.) were kept. This room was usually on the gospel, or north, side of the

* The Prayer Book Dictionary.

church at the east end. In this room much of the work of the officiating laymen, in assisting the clergy, was done. Later it became customary for the officers of the church to meet in this room to transact the business of the parish; consequently they were known as the "vestrymen." The quotation "Him that was over the vestry," (II Kings 10: 22), is supposed to refer to the place where vestments were kept for supplying the worshippers of Baal.*

St. Augustine speaks of "The responsible lay functionaries of the parish as 'seniores ecclesiastici'," or senior churchmen. The service of laymen has continued from apostolic days throughout Christendom. In the fifteenth century they were known as "guardiani ecclesiae," or guardian churchmen. These have been known in England as "church wardens." They were called in the canons of the church as "questmen," because they inquired after the parish-

* Encyclopedia Biblica.

ioners as to their heresy and offenses. They were also called "synodmen" because of attending the synod of the diocese. Since the sixteenth century they were charged with the "movables" of the church, such as money, books, maintenance, repairs, churchyard, etc. Also at times with the administration of the poor laws and other civic duties. They were required to render an account at the end of each year.

In view of the foregoing, our preference for the use of the term vestry to designate the official body of a congregation is based upon the following reasons: (a) It is a term of purely ecclesiastical origin and has no connection with, or inference to, any but congregational officials. (b) It is a term suggesting a close and co-operative relation to the minister. (c) It is a term of ecclesiastical dignity. As we build churches to suggest worship and nothing else, so we here use the term vestry to suggest nothing but a group of churchmen.

As to Elders

The idea and term "elder" goes back to the Israelitish tribes which were ruled by heads of component families. Elder is probably the earliest name after "apostle" for Christian official (Acts 11:30). The term elder is etymologically the same as "presbyter," which is used by the Presbyterian Church to designate their ruling body.

As to Deacons

The term "deacon" is from the Greek word "diakonos" and is used in the New Testament in the sense of a household servant, especially serving at meal. As early as Philippians 1:1 and I Timothy 3:1-13, where it is used four times, the term is employed in a sense subordinate to that of the minister (episkopos). Paul is no doubt here referring to the two functions necesary in any organized community, government and service: the former the right of the bishop or minister, the latter the privi-

lege of the deacon. The term deacon is used by Paul in the sense of doing the work of God (II Corinthians 6: 4; 11: 23; Ephesians 6: 21; I Thessalonians 3: 2). He also uses it of ministering to the needs of others (Romans 6: 1; I Corinthians 16: 15; II Corinthians 8: 4; 9: 1).

The term for deacon or household servant is employed in connection with the appointment of the seven (Acts 6: 2). The apostolic vestry (deacons) consisted of but seven because this number had religious significance and was sufficient for their needs. The importance of the number seven is secondary to the practical requirements of the church, so that the number of vestrymen is regulated according to the size of the congregation and the service desired. The number is determined by each congregation in its constitution.

2

HINTS FOR VESTRY MEETINGS

The vestry meeting differs from all other deliberative bodies, in that Christian love should prevail. The following general suggestions may prove helpful:

(a) Prayer should be a prominent part of every meeting. Human counsel and wisdom will be of but little avail except as directed by the Holy Spirit. Vestrymen should learn to pray in public, especially among themselves. Meetings are different when we pray. Difference and dissension never grow out of a spirit of prayer. It is a mistake to expect or ask the minister to do all the praying.

(b) Decisions should be arrived at more in the spirit of agreement. Bit-

ter discussions, where ill feelings are shown, never exalt the cause of Christ. Forcing of resolutions and keenness of argument seldom are very productive of good. Strong minority opinions are apt to breed contention.

(c) Personalities, so far as possible, should be avoided. It is bad form to discuss the deformities of either pastor or members. If such matters must be undertaken, it is better to have a committee visit and speak privately.

(d) Finances often kill a meeting. They should never be the "big item." Better to leave them in the hands of a capable and trustworthy committee, who will prayerfully recommend to the vestry some wise action.

(e) The attitude of the chairman has much to do with the spirit as well as the accomplishments of a meeting.

3

SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING THE VESTRY

The following suggestions are based upon the installation vow which each vestryman must take when inducted into office. Nothing is required or expected in these suggestions which is not already his duty by virtue of his own voluntary public obligation. We believe he will consider it a pleasure, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to put these and many more similar suggestions into practice.

The minister should be the chairman of the vestry. By virtue of his office and call he is the head of the congregation, the president of the corporation. He should preside, unless he chooses otherwise, at all congregational and vestry meetings. His preparation, train-

ing and ministerial balance also commend him to this position. He is given this position in the model congregational constitution of the United Lutheran Church.

The vestry should be represented in every departmental work of the church. In this way only can the minister be relieved of details and give proper time and attention to instruction and leadership. Then, too, only by such organization will all phases of the work of the congregation come under review and discussion in the reports of its various committees. Without a carefully organized vestry, the discussions are apt to become unbalanced, too much time given to relatively unimportant and too little to important matters.

Most men like to talk about the tangible things; consequently, without due organization and management, the time of meetings will be consumed in discussion of finances and property. This is said to be business-like. But it is not

so for the church. She has bigger things, such as evangelism, education, services and benevolences. For this reason it might be well to place reports of committees on property and finance last.

It is difficult to separate the departments of church activity. In some cases the line of cleavage must be more imaginary than real. But we attempt it solely for the purpose of encouraging a well balanced and efficient officiary of the church.

We make no reference here to the officers of the vestry, such as Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Benevolence Treasurer and Financial Secretary. These and their duties are provided for by the congregational constitution.

We conceive of the congregational life, aside from the service of the minister, as revolving about five important functions: Evangelism, Education, Benevolence, Services and Finances. In

organizing a vestry, committees should be appointed to represent each of these functions. We elaborate a little upon each of these in the following:

In the appointing of committees, numbers should not be the first consideration. One or two men often do more than a larger number. It is sometimes better to have smaller committees and more interest represented. Some churches have had splendid results from large committees, headed by a small number from the vestry and the majority from the congregation. These committees hold meetings and organize among themselves. They report to the vestry through the vestry representatives who should head the committees. Large committees are more desirable for such work as evangelism, education and benevolence.

Services

The very essential thing for the vestryman is to see that the services of

God's house are properly conducted. This includes all possible assistance that can be given the minister. It would include altar attention, music, ushers, the needs of visiting clergymen, and details of conveniences for the minister. This committee would stand ready for any duty concerning the services of worship or prayer. Upon these services depend much, if not most, of the other branches of congregational life.

Evangelism

The term evangelism embraces primarily the privilege of preaching and teaching the Word. This is more exclusively the function of the ministry. But we use the term here in a more practical sense as embracing that function of church life required to interest the non-Christians, delinquents, visitation of the sick, parish visiting and adjusting difficulties among members. It is the practical fulfillment of Jesus' command to His apostles: "Go ye there-

fore and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19, 20). It is the missionary work within the parish. Those who assist in this work are the "field agents of the congregation." Upon the activity of this committee much of the attendance and spiritual growth of the congregation depends.

There was a time when all this was left to the minister. Modern city life and its conditions, together with other pressing needs, render general congregational visiting almost impossible. The minister desires to, and does visit the sick, and so far as possible the prospective members. But to ask him to call generally throughout the congregation to promote the general interests of the church is often requesting the impossible.

Benevolence

Benevolence is far more than money. It represents the very life of the con-

gregation. The first and only offerings ever lifted by the Apostles were for benevolence, helping their needy brethren of another congregation. Benevolence registers the practical faith and love of the congregation. It is the one thing that links the congregation with all other congregations in the promotion of the Kingdom.

This committee not only gathers the money for the fifteen or more different benevolences of the church, but sees that the information and needs of missionaries, aged, orphans, colleges, deaconesses, etc., are properly presented. They should see that all apportionments, at least, are paid. This committee stands as the "big brother" to all the agencies of serving love. The congregation that has no interests in these things has but little life itself. This is the one phase of congregational life that comes closest to fulfilling our Lord's command "If ye love me feed my sheep" (John 21: 17).

Education

This department has to do with the work of the congregation as represented in the church school, both during the week and on Sunday. The importance of this work and the advance in educational methods requires that some person or persons on the vestry should give special attention to it. The purpose of this committee should be to keep in active touch with the school, render every possible sympathetic encouragement to the superintendent and through him to the departments; see that proper instruction is given; see that adequate and up-to-date equipment is provided; that the work of the departments is properly co-ordinated and conducive to high Christian character. None the least of these activities should be the assistance given the minister in the instruction and preparation of the young for membership in the church.

Finance

It is needless to describe the duties of this phase of vestry service. They are quite apparent. The vestrymen who serve in this department should so far as possible relieve the minister of financial responsibilities. Concerning this general subject we have spoken more at length under the heading of Church Finance.

General

In these phases of congregational activity, it is not intended that a few men shall do all required in their department. But they shall become the leaders to solicit the co-operative interest of others, in the accomplishing of their task. The more people interested, the easier the task and the better for the life of the congregation.

IV

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF VESTRYMEN

1

THE VESTRYMAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE MINISTER

(Knowing His Minister Better)

That the vestry may appreciate their office properly, they should understand, so far as possible, the minister with whom they serve and to whom they pledge loyalty. The minister should always be held in high regard as a man of God. He is "the Lord's anointed." It is a creditable distinction for any one, especially an officer, to speak well of the pastor. Right or wrong, he is, or endeavors to be, a good man. Though his sermons may not be the best, they are the voice of a consecrated person.

The Minister Necessary

The office of the ministry has been instituted according to the divine will and command of God. "No congregation has the right to decide whether it will have a pastor or not; the Lord has settled that question long since. Wherever there is a group of Christians, they are required to establish in their midst the ministry of the Word and for this purpose call or appoint a pastor" (*Rev. Theodore Graebner*). This same principle obtains when a minister resigns. The proper synodical authorities should be consulted and a successor chosen as soon as possible.

A minister is very much concerned about who constitutes his vestry. He very well knows that the best interests of the Kingdom cannot be advanced if the vestry is critical or quarrelsome.

How to Address Him

Frequently, it is wondered by what term the minister should be addressed.

In accordance with general etiquette, it is proper when speaking to a person to use Mr. or Mrs.; when speaking of them to use their titles. While some ministers may like the term Reverend or Doctor (if he be entitled to such distinction), the term that expresses most and is generally best liked by ministers is Pastor. This is the one term that may be used with propriety in his presence or absence.

How to Support Him

The salary paid should not be a minimum but the maximum of which the congregation is capable. The dignity and ethics of his office place him at the mercy of his vestrymen and congregation. Congregations sometimes take advantage of their ministers by paying the lowest salary with which they can retain him. Sometimes when a new minister is called he is offered the least salary with which he is expected to accept. Nor should salary be decreased be-

cause the minister is unpopular. Often strong, brave men, God's truest ambassadors, are unpopular. He is expected to please God, rather than the people. To squeeze him out by small salary is unbecoming. If it must be, let them speak to a conference or synodical officer concerning a change rather than be guilty of un-Christian practice. A minister who gives his best, his all, in service is deserving of the fullest financial appreciation. His salary should be as much as the best paid men in his church, and if possible more. Congregations rate themselves before synod by the care they take of their ministers.

Among His People

The minister occupies a unique position among his people. He can have great intimacy with none. He must be fair and impartial, regardless of position, rank or wealth. He must often act upon what he believes to be his Christian duty without consultation. Nor

does he need always to explain or give reasons for his actions. As the president and head of his parish, it is assumed that he should have a reasonable latitude of authority.

But a small proportion of his service is apparent to the congregation. Even this to many seems to be very simple. Though he may be ever so industrious in the performance of his duties, perhaps only five per cent of his people may know it. The other ninety-five per cent may think him indolent because they have not seen him during the week.

A Four-Fold Life

The life of a pastor, particularly a city pastor, is four-fold. It is often difficult for him to determine which of these duties is most important. His ordination vow includes more than his relation to a local parish. While he promises to preach the pure gospel of our Lord, and administer the sacra-

ments, he is also pledged to promote the interests of the Kingdom.

1. *The studies* of a minister should not be neglected. Sermons require much reading and preparation. This work cannot be done "by the hour," but when the mind is at composure. Correspondence, telephone, and receiving of visitors greatly reduce the effectiveness of hours spent in the study. Here with great thought and labor are born the sermons and ideas that should govern the thinking and conduct of the parish. No one but a minister can understand the mental struggle and the unmeasureable time this part of his ministry requires.

2. *The homes, the sick, the organizations* of his congregation require much attention. These occupy all possible hours of calling and take him out almost every evening. The sick are in different hospitals of the city and require much time. Homes that require attention often necessitate several calls.

The work of taking spiritual uplift to people greatly taxes the nervous energy of the minister.

The contact with, and oversight of, the organizations of the congregation require many evenings and irregular hours of retirement, which if not guarded destroys physical endurance, or unfits him for normal mental activity the day following.

3. *The minister represents the larger work of the church.* The work of the synod and other Christian groups and bodies can be done only by the minister. This is a part of his obligation. He is not only supposed to put into operation in the congregation the recommendations and rulings of synod, but he represents the benevolence of synod. He stands before the congregation as the advocate of the orphans, aged, missionaries, deaconesses, etc. The boards and committees of synod represent a national church in miniature, embracing every interest of the

great church at home and abroad. With these he must be active and informed.

4. *The minister's life is closely related to his community and the unchurched.* There are always newcomers to be visited, non-Christians to be interviewed and community interests to be looked after. Community work requires co-operative efforts, with meetings to be attended and service rendered. It is this side of the minister's life that projects the church into the moral well-being of the community. Wherever the minister can bear testimony to his Christian faith and not deny or compromise his faith, is his opportunity for service, and he should not be hampered in such contacts.

We have said nothing about the services of the church, which require the expending of great nervous energy; nor of the instruction of young and old in classes. There are also the policy and finances of the church as well as other

grave problems which always require considerable thought.

In these paragraphs we have not desired to picture the minister as a martyr, for all his services are rendered with cheer and pleasure, but to reveal a service that is usually not understood. A minister in assuming the obligation of a congregation is a man of ability (or he would not have been graduated from our seminaries and called by the congregation). If he does his work well, he is exceedingly busy. He bears the responsibility of the church before the congregation, community and synod. He is deserving of every respect and requires the undivided and loyal support of every vestryman and parishioner.

2

THE RELATION OF VESTRYMEN TO DELINQUENT MEMBERS

We use the term "delinquent" as synonymous with "inactive," but prefer it because it is more expressive of the member's negligence. The United Lutheran Church is so constituted that members cannot be dropped at pleasure, simply because of delinquency. There are but three ways for the removal of membership. One is by death; a second is by letter of transfer to another congregation; and the third is by excommunication. Offending members may be disciplined and excommunicated by the vestry. Persistent delinquency may become the equivalent of self-excommunication. It is obvious that there

is a group, all too large, who remain members though inactive, and who do not merit the severity of discipline. These delinquents become the problem of the church.

Communing Membership the Basis of Church Calculations

In order that the congregation may not be penalized for its inactive constituency, the benevolence apportionment is based only on the communing membership. These are the "salt" of the church, the only ones upon whom any congregation can depend. These only have voting privilege in the local church and count in the church at large. For this reason, as well as for transfer privileges, careful records of all communicants should be kept. All members are "confirmed" members. The difference between the number of communing and confirmed members reveals the number of delinquents. Sometimes such non-communing or delinquent members

contribute toward the church and by the constitution would be considered active. However, the responsibility of the church is to have all enjoy the privilege and benefit of the Holy Communion.

Church Different from Secular Organizations

The church is often thought of as similar to secular organizations. If dues are not paid or obligations not discharged, membership privileges cease. The effectiveness of such organizations depends upon their disciplinary methods. This may be proper for them, but the church is a far different structure. The church is a life. It has a gospel to proclaim; a living Christ to love and serve. The influence and effectiveness of the church does not depend upon its organization but upon the influence of the living Christ through its individual members. The church is never judged by its delinquents so much

as by the genuineness of the piety of the active.

The Church Must be a Mother to the Delinquent

But what is to be done with the inactive or delinquent? Like the poor, they are always with us. They once confessed, worshiped and communed. Should they be cast from the rolls because of delinquency? No, is the unqualified answer. The attitude of the church is that of a mother to a son. He may neglect, even disgrace her; he is nevertheless her son; the object of her watching and prayerful solicitude. Most of us do not know what is good for us. Somebody must watch over us and prepare a place and opportunity for us to return, when, as the prodigal son, "we come to ourselves." Many delinquents have wandered away through temptation and susceptibility toward the world. Some may be no more worldly at heart than those who are

active. The delinquents have the same needs as the active, but perhaps ignore them. Some time they may realize this need and return. It would be very wrong for their own brethren, while they are stupefied by worldliness, to cut off the way of return.

Jesus' Teaching Concerning Delinquents

Suppose the father in the parable of the prodigal son would have steeled his heart and locked the door against his son. Peter was troubled with a similar problem and Jesus told him he must forgive seventy times seven, that is, he must be indefinitely patient and forgiving toward the erring. We who are active toward the church may be but little more vitally related to our Lord than some of these. We have the consciousness of being faithful to the means of grace and benefit by the services of worship. But all of us err and are happy to look upon God as our merciful Father. We, as a church,

must not forget to practice the same mercy toward our delinquent brethren that we desire for ourselves.

We Should Not Pass Hasty Judgment

To cut off by elimination or "dropping" is to pass judgment, which may be unwarranted, upon the delinquent. It is safer and far more Christlike to deal patiently and lovingly with them. These inactive members are not only the problem but the opportunity of the church. In them we find our own life. They become the field for the practice of evangelism. By our solicitude for them we keep our own fires of love and patience burning. With these we have the privilege of exercising that forgiveness for which we pray, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." It would seem as though by the inactive and erring, our Lord would make a church more completely holy than could otherwise be, for He can make even the wrath of nations to praise Him.

3

THE RELATION OF VESTRYMEN TO THE REMOVED

Importance of Membership in a Local Church

It is the principle of the church that a person should be a member of the church in the community in which he lives. For this reason there is a mission program by which people may have a church in their community. A member should make two contributions toward the church; the one is his direct influence through activity and the other is the indirect influence through association with friends and neighbors. The latter depends almost entirely upon membership in a local church. It is for the good of the member as well as for the church to encourage persons moving out of town and who cannot attend

worship in their own church, to unite with a local church. Pastors and vestrymen who persuade retention of such membership for financial or sentimental reasons, create suspicions of selfish motives in the minds of members. Furthermore, they dishonor their office and defeat the purposes of the church.

Communion Records and Transfers

In order to make this possible, a system of transfer of membership has been arranged. This privilege is for those who are active members; that is, those who have communed and contributed within the last year. For this reason, as well as for voting privileges at annual elections, careful communion records should be kept. Sometimes pastors and officers are lenient and grant letters of transfer to the delinquent, wording the letter accordingly. This is done hoping that the delinquent may become active in the congregation to which he is going.

Receiving Members

All persons received into membership should be formally received by the pastor at the altar. When this is not done, sometimes the newly received does not know whether he is a member or not. We have known of confusion to result from a lack of uniformity in receiving members at the altar. Three instances come to my mind where the pastor simply announced the names of persons coming into the church by letters of transfer. One was a stormy Sunday, another was a case of sickness and the third a misunderstanding as to the person being present. In each case the persons were absent when the announcement of reception was made. They did not know for a good while later that they had been received. I have had many say, "Must I go up to the altar? Reverend So-and-so did not require it."

Receiving all members at the altar is dignified. It supports the desire of our

Lord that we should confess Him publicly. It gives the minister an opportunity to greet the newcomer in the name of his church. It gives the congregation an opportunity to know who their new brethren are. It treats all members alike.

Transferring Members

Letters of transfer are supposed to be given by the authority of the church, acting through the vestry. This prerogative may be and often is delegated to the pastor as circumstances require. When this is done, report should be made for the approval of the vestry and the keeping of the official records of the church correct. No pastor should receive a member of another congregation without a letter of transfer or at least the approval of the former pastor. The requirements for granting transfers are usually fixed by the constitution or custom of the church. But when request for transfer is made by the

member or pastor, it should be honored. Unless a member is under particular discipline, membership in another church cannot be prevented. If the member is not entitled to a creditable letter it may be so stated. But everything reasonable should be done to encourage members who so desire to unite with a local church. Any hindrance is bad taste and often prevents the probability of a more active future membership. Delinquents may be received without letter, the former pastor having approved, by another form known to the church as "restoration."

Transfers Should Bear Name of Church

Church membership is not alone local but at the same time a part of the great church. A member is not dismissed but transferred from one congregational unit to another. It is continuous membership with "relocalization." Consequently a transfer is never given to a member without specifying the name of

the church to which he intends to go. If this were not done the member could take his transfer and join no church; thus the church would be dismissing him out into the world. Or he could join some church of which his pastor had no knowledge and which would prove unwise. There are many people in our cities who were once active members, holding indefinite transfers, and who are practically lost to the church.

Limited Transfers

The member is always considered a member of the former congregation until notice of the deposit of the transfer. He should continue his contributions until that time. A time limit should be mentioned on the transfer. There are instances in which letters have been retained for years, during which time there was membership nowhere, with no local responsibility. A transfer is intended to do a specific thing, namely, transfer a member from one congrega-

tion to another. If it is permitted to do anything else, it becomes an injustice, both to the member and the church. When these things are specified, the member knows exactly what is to be done. The former pastor also knows that if he receives no return from the transfer within the time mentioned, the person automatically becomes reinstated.

Letters of Transfer

The form of transfer is not highly important so long as it states the facts. We suggest a form as follows:

A Letter of Transfer

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

This is to certify that *Mr. John Doe* is a member of *Muhlenberg Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church, of Philadelphia,* in good and regular standing, and is dismissed at his own request to become a member of *Trinity Evangeli-*

cal Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, to whose fraternal care we cordially commend him.

.....
Pastor

.....
Secretary of Vestry

(Date) *Monday after Second Sunday in Lent,* 1929.

The membership of the above will continue in *Muhlenberg Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church* until notice is given of the presentation of the above transfer.

The above transfer is void if not presented in the above named church within three months from date.

4

THE VESTRYMEN'S RELATION TO STEWARDSHIP

Meaning of Stewardship

The term "s t e w a r d" is from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "keeper." He was a person employed by a wealthy owner to superintend his domestic affairs, overseeing the servants, collecting rents and keeping accounts. While he lived amidst and with all things, he owned nothing. He used all things as his master desired and to him he rendered regular and careful accounts. Our Lord illustrated this beautifully in the parables of the Talents, the Vineyard and the Unjust Steward.

The Christian, by virtue of his confessed faith in Christ, should automatically assume the conception of his life as a stewardship to God. Like a man working in a bank, his time and the

money he handles are not his own; that each day the material things over which he has control should be regulated to his owner's pleasure and profit. Time and material are not ours. It is not so much a question of how much time and material we should give to the Lord's work, but how much we dare keep for ourselves.

A Happy and Aggressive Church Depends Upon Stewardship

It is important that Christian people and particularly the vestry of the church should recognize this relationship. A happy and successful service in the church depends upon it. It should be the privilege of the vestry to practice the principle of stewardship in their daily relationships and their duty to promote intelligence and obedience to this principle throughout the church. It lifts service from the low plane of selfish choice, and church finances from cold commercialism. S t e w a r d s h i p

changes the whole complexion of church life. It removes both the niggardliness of contributing and expending from church work. In this light the church need not be the cheapest institution to which members may give only enough to be respectable. But it becomes the leading enterprise in thought and gift, because it is the only means of returning and giving account of stewardship. It elevates the conception of the ministry and worship. No church can thrive when its vestry, especially, looks upon its service and money as a pittance to be cast to a begging enterprise. When conscience keeps the heart, and the world controls the purse and service, church membership is a meaningless and unprogressive thing.

The Opportunity of Vestrymen to Instruct

It is for the vestry of the church to see that this Christian conception of

membership is taught and practiced. It should be proclaimed from pulpit, not so much with financial insinuations as to teach the Christian conception of all life toward its Master. The opportunity of the officers lies in their visitation among the membership in the interests of church finances. When stewardship is the conception, they need not hesitate to go. They are not going as solicitors and beggars, but to inform concerning local needs and assist their brethren to live what they profess when they acknowledge Christ as their Lord. The term Lord means owner and master. When He is Lord the whole of life should be surrendered to Him in loving worship and service.

5

THE RELATION OF VESTRYMEN AND THE CONGREGATION TO SYNOD

Necessity of a Larger Organization

The church is organized in a fashion similar to our nation. There is the county or city, state and nation. Each is obligated to the other. Our great national structure depends upon the political and financial support of the state and the state upon the county. As a return for the support of the county to the state, many benefits are made possible which otherwise could not be. Among these are protection of life, property, sanitation, transportation, etc. Business recognizes such organization. Each local industry contributes toward a larger organization. By this means trade and industry are protected and enlarged. This is the only way by

which larger activities are possible. A hundred churches co-operating can better provide for two hundred orphans than each alone could care for two. A group can often accomplish what an individual cannot.

The Synod

The church begins with the local congregation. This is the unit of authority in congregational forms of government. There are many things, however, in which it surrenders its individual prerogatives for the sake of a larger and more efficient service. The system of organization is the local congregation, then the local synod, then the union of synods or the United Lutheran Church in America, as it is officially known. The word "synod" is from a Greek word "synodos" and means "a coming together." Synod is composed of the ministers and a lay representative from each of its congregations. The lay representatives are

elected by the vestry of the congregations. The representative need not of necessity be a vestryman himself unless the constitution or custom requires it.

The local synods are divided into group meetings, called conferences. These are not for official action but the discussion of the problems of the congregations and fellowship, also the encouragement of its ministers. These conferences, as the synod, are composed of the pastors and a lay representative from each congregation. The local synods meet annually, but the United Lutheran Church meets bi-annually. This body is composed of representatives elected by the local synods in the proportion of one clergyman and one layman to every ten pastorates. There are thirty-five local synods in the United Lutheran Church.

Delegates—Electing and Reporting

It is the duty of each congregation to elect or appoint a representative to

synod. His name should be enrolled upon the minutes by proper credentials forwarded by the secretary of the vestry to the secretary of synod in advance. Should he be absent, his name stands as the congregation's representative. To avoid absence and a lack of representation, an alternate should be chosen and his credentials forwarded.

But the important thing is a report by the representative to the congregation. It is not sufficient that the minister possess the information and apply it as he may have occasion. The delegate should make an intelligent and encouraging report. This should be made to the congregation. It is customary for the congregation to bear the expense of both the minister and delegate to synod. They should also be benefitted by the delegate's report as well as the minister's service. This is the way a congregation keeps informed and active.

Supporting the Synod

The importance of supporting the local synod is obvious. It is the responsibility of the church, by its very nature, to support its orphans, aged and infirm; also its aged and infirm ministers. The privilege and duty of the church is to spread the gospel through its missionaries and other agencies of service. It would be practically impossible for a local congregation to do this by itself. Consequently many congregations combine, through the synod, and do it unitedly. By this means it is done more effectively, efficiently and economically. Almost all the money contributed by the local congregation to the local synod or to the United Lutheran Church is for the very purpose of support and supervision of these Christian charities. This is the work of the Kingdom. Inasmuch as we do for these needy, we serve our Lord (Matthew 25:40).

The Service Rendered by Synod

But the synod means much more than this. It provides the congregation with ministers. It ordains them and affords the congregation the protection from false and improper preachers. It insures the congregation a minister who has been properly educated, trained under the learned and pious men of the church; ministers who have been carefully examined by the venerable pastors of the church. For this service the congregation should ever show its gratitude by loyal encouragement and support.

The support a congregation owes to the synod is that of approval and encouragement to the policies and plans it makes after prayerful and careful deliberation. It should sympathetically support its officers. There should never be failure to contribute the full amount of apportionment requested by synod. Should a congregation fail in any of its obligations to its synod, it fails in its

real mission. A selfish, isolated congregation tends toward a lifeless and unhappy people.

The Apportionment

The word "apportionment" is sometimes used for "benevolence." Benevolence is the contributions we make toward caring for the united work of the church, as we have mentioned. In order that each congregation, in proportion to its size, may know what is expected of it, the whole amount required for the support of the united work of the church is apportioned. This is done systematically upon a pro rata basis of the communing membership of the congregation. Because of this apportioning, it is sometimes called apportionment and erroneously looked upon as a tax.

The Apportionment Should be Paid in Full

The apportionment is the *minimum* amount required by the local synod and

the United Lutheran Church for the general work of the church. No congregation does its full duty unless it contributes all it can. To merely pay the apportionment, or to reserve a balance contributed by the congregation for that purpose, is unfair both to the congregation and the work. Congregations are often unfair in that they stress their own local needs and simply receive "what falls" for benevolence. It would be well for vestrymen to give benevolence a personal angle. Suppose it were my child in the orphans' home, or my father were an aged minister; or my brother a missionary. What then would be my attitude? Is just anything good enough because some of the Lord's people are less fortunate than I?

When the budgets of the homes for orphans and aged, the mission and missionary agencies are fixed for the year it is upon the basis of the barest necessities. If more should be contributed, it means that a little more of the neces-

sities of life may be given the Lord's needy or a little larger work done by the church. Sometimes complaint is made that the apportionment is larger each year. This must of necessity be the case. As the church enlarges, the numbers of homes, missionary agencies and general work of the church increases. We sometimes hear stingy people, whose hearts the Lord has not touched with generosity, say, "The church wants money." They forget that it would not need it if they, and others like them, were honest toward the Lord. While this selfish sentiment is bad enough in the individual, let it never become the attitude of a congregation.

6

THE RELATION OF VESTRYMEN TO CHURCH BUSINESS

Business and Personality

There has been much said in later years about the affairs of the church being conducted in a "business-like manner." There should be orderliness (I Corinthians 14:40), and the best of system in an atmosphere of unquestionable confidence and integrity. But care must be taken in the employment of what may be called "business methods."

In the business world we deal with employer and employee. The common understanding of the term "business" is to conduct for "financial profit." In the church we deal with volunteers who may or may not serve, or who attend as they may be moved by conscience. This requires not so much "method" as "per-

sonality." With the right person and spirit almost any method will succeed. The members of the congregation have a right to feel that they are not dealt with mechanically or impersonally but by brethren who love them and are interested in their highest welfare.

The pursuance of so-called business methods may lead, if not conducted with care, to the conception that the church affairs are commercialized; that membership means merely money; that every affair should yield a financial income; that every service should be remunerated; that the pastor's salary should be regulated by the balance in the treasury; that the work is well done as long as bills are paid and the treasury shows a respectable balance.

Faith, the Bank of the Church

There is, of course, a stern necessity in each of these. But the business of the church is vastly different in that it is based upon the promotion of what

we conscientiously believe to be our Lord's will, money or no money, profit or no profit. Is it our Lord's will that certain things be done, then they should be attempted and He will, in ways of His own choosing, provide the means. Business does not undertake the erection of buildings, the employment of service, the dispatching of messengers, without at least a fair proportion of the finances in hand. But the great things of the church are often done without material resources. Faith in the Lord, faith in the cause, faith in the congregation, are the church's greatest assets. These are the bank upon which she constantly secures and discounts her notes. This is sometimes difficult to understand, but beautiful buildings, innumerable ministers and missionaries are monumental proof of this fact.

Giving Instead of Raising Money

Nor should the income for the work of the Lord come from buying and sell-

ing or commercial sources. This is a reflection uon our Lord, Who owns all things and of which we are but the stewards. Suppers, bazaars, selling of tickets, etc., belittle the church. They rob it of its dignity and sacredness. No minister is proud of such catch-penny methods. They are usually preferred by those who are less generous and who desire to "raise" money rather than give the Lord what is due Him. Business does not do thus. It charges enough for its commodity to carry its overhead. Those who want the article must pay the price of it. Why should a person desire salvation and at the same time want the other person to pay for it? There is something wrong with faith that does not open the purse.

Giving is the proper, the reasonable, the scriptural way of supporting the church. No person is ever impoverished by giving to the Lord. Giving promotes interest in the cause. It promotes Christian love and virtue. Our Lord gave

His life for us. How can we expect to succeed and be happy unless we give for Him and to Him? No person is so poor but that he can give something. (Mark 12: 41-44). Giving is the principle our Lord and His apostles taught. It should be taught and encouraged as the means of prosecuting every phase of church work.

It is understood that social activity and Christian fellowship are wholesome and essential, and should not be neglected. But these things should not become the financial basis for church finance.

7

THE VESTRYMEN'S RELATION TO THE HANDLING OF CONGREGATIONAL MONEY

It is precarious to discuss church finances in a treatise like this. However, a few things of general character may be spoken of with profit. The three general financial problems of the congregation are benevolence, current expenses and building or repair fund. Since the last is usually a special problem, we shall say nothing about it.

Benevolence

Benevolence, or apportionment, as we have explained elsewhere, is not an option but an obligation of the congregation. It should be remitted monthly to the synod. While congregations hold

benevolence, the boards of the church must borrow to pay their current expenses. Missionaries and homes cannot be maintained by but one contribution a year, even if it is the entire apportionment. A church lacks a high sense of honor that borrows its benevolence for local purposes, compelling the boards of the church to pay interest. There is also a lack of honorable pride when a congregation neglects to contribute its full share for benevolence. When a congregation fails, it means that some other congregation must pay it or the charities of the church suffer.

A Separate Treasurer for Benevolence

There should be a benevolence treasurer in every congregation. This money does not belong to the local congregation and should be handled, not simply separately, but by a separate person. The chief reason for this is that a treasurer has a solicitous interest in the funds he handles. He is anxious to see

the obligations promptly and honorably met. When benevolence is handled by the congregational treasurer, he is concerned about current expenses and benevolence has no one to plead its cause. Then the orphans and missionaries have no financial agent to promote their interests.

A congregation should pay all the benevolence, both regular and special, it can. If it wants to economize, it should not begin with the Lord's dependent, who look to the congregation for food and shelter. The payment of benevolence is the proof of a congregation's life and love.

Current Expense and Salary

Current expense is usually a problem of its own, involving chiefly the salary of the pastor, organist, sexton, etc. It is honorable to pay the pastor all the salary the congregation can afford, rather than to have his services for as

little as possible. Pastors would not and cannot go at will. To keep them on a minimum salary is to be unfair to them. If deficit occurs in the current accounts, it is unfair to skimp or delay the pastor's salary. This is his living, while to the congregation it means contributions above living. It is unfair to finance the church with the pastor's salary. Because the pastor is patient is no reason for taking advantage of him.

Hints on Finance

1. The best and most accurate system of finance should be employed. There should be check-ups wherever practicable. Reports should be carefully and regularly made. Loose and inadequate methods lead to temptation, negligence and inefficiency.

2. The treasurer of any fund should not feel that it is his own and that he can dispense or hold according to his personal judgment.

3. Better to have many contribute than to have a few pay large amounts. Contributions depend largely upon information as to objects and needs.

4. No person impoverishes himself by gifts to the Lord's cause, though they should be generous. It is to be expected that rich people are such by keeping rather than giving. They cannot be expected to finance the church. Gifts, though small, from consecrated hearts are the power by which the material side of the Kingdom comes.

5. Delinquents should be solicited, not the congregation scolded.

6. The every-member canvass is the privilege and power of the congregation. To neglect this is sufficient cause for failure.

7. Perpetual stewardship education is imperative to successful church financing.

8. The pastor should not be expected to be the financial promoter of the congregation. It is well if he does not know

the individual contributions of his congregation. His influence is often weakened by personal matters of a financial character.

8

THE VESTRYMEN'S RELATION TO THE WORLD-WIDE CHURCH

The Church a Great Corporation

In assuming the office of vestryman one ought to see the church in full view. The local church is but a branch office of this greatest corporation in the world. Some companies are great because they manufacture great quantities of a certain commodity. Others are great because of the great amount of money and property involved. The church far exceeds the greatest of these in the value of its product and the money and property involved, also in the number of its investors.

Commercial corporations produce that which people eat, wear or use. They need not care whether people are

rich or poor, happy or unhappy, good or bad, only as it affects their market. The church is concerned with the people themselves. It is interested in life—better life—which becomes the motive of all things else. The church is, aside from its divinity, an association of innumerable people desiring to improve themselves and others by following the life and teachings of Jesus. Can you think of a bigger business than producing better lives, happier people? Aside from the material investment, it transcends by immeasurable distance any mercantile operation.

Touches Every Point of Human Need

But the church, from a human point of view, is a corporation of helpfulness. The motive power is Christian love. Helpfulness is not an incident but its purpose. The great purpose of the church is "Serving Love," reaching every form of human need. This work is known under the general term of

"benevolence." It embraces missions at home and abroad, conducted in twelve different languages in our own country; education and the maintenance of schools and colleges for youth as well as for ministerial students; homes for aged; orphan homes; deaconess institutions; work among immigrants; work among the poor and unfortunate, crippled, blind and deaf; homes for young men and women in cities; work among Jews; the conducting of sessions of Conference, and Synod, the publication of books and other church literature.

A Twenty-four Hour Church

The great church of which every congregation is a unit, operates twenty-four hours of every day. We have mission agencies in almost every country. When we retire at night, our brethren, whom we support in the far East, are arising for the duties of the day. As our Lord is ever watchful, so His church never rests. Our gifts, like angel wings,

carry the gospel to all the world and hover over every human need.

These agencies are all operated through the local church in addition to its own work. For a congregation to feel that when it has conducted its own work its task is finished, is to see but a small part of the Kingdom. These things every officer ought to understand and sympathetically encourage.

9

RELATION OF VESTRY TO PUBLICITY

There is a distinction to be made between publicity and advertising. Publicity is letting the truth be known. The popular conception of advertising is an attempt to create a demand. Demands for religion are created by the Holy Spirit through meditation and experience. The facts are against church advertising producing such demands. Religion is a thing of conviction, such as men and women die for. Can faith in God—even faith in man—be strengthened by a bill board on the church? Is it any wonder there is persistent pressure for the open theatre on the Lord's Day when the church puts on concerts? Do we improve people by always giving

them what they want? Is that the way we rear our children?

In a day of commercialism the church is apt to be caught in its current. Business men are apt to think the church is not a "going concern" if its name does not appear in illuminated letters or on street "dodgers." We have no quarrel with those who do extensive advertising, but we believe a careful thought should be given. A going church is one where hearts are warmed toward the Father and where Christian character is quietly but sturdily built. The largest audiences do not necessarily produce the best characters. It does, however, often produce the best salary. The great things for human benefit have usually been done in a more intensive way by small groups. Our Lord and His apostles are a good example of this. It is very desirable to have large audiences when they come with a desire to worship rather than a curiosity to see what will happen next.

The world is encroaching upon the church and one of its chief allurements is to have the church handle sacred things in a worldly way.

Salvation Too Sacred to Advertise

The things of salvation are too sacred to advertise. They can only be propagated by personality. The only thing the church can advertise is the "machinery" of religion, such as the name of the church, the minister, his sermons and such. In other fields of advertising it is the actual commodity. People care very little about the president of the company or the kind or place of the factory: it is the article. Most of the so-called appealing things advertised about churches are very foolish when carefully considered.

Frequent Evils of Advertising

When the crusade of advertising is entered upon, it leads to three things:

First, to an undue publicity of the ministry. Of course this is not distasteful to some ministers. It is like most things of the world—the more we get, the more we want. But it is always done at the expense of true religion. The apostles tried to keep themselves in the background (Acts 14: 8-18). The truest religion is apt to be found in the humblest and those who care little about popularity. To keep himself conspicuous a minister is tempted and often does to some extent sacrifice his personal modesty and distort his idea of Christian ethics. A second thing is the magnifying of sermon subjects. This leads to subjects rather than sermons. It encourages the choosing of subjects that catch the eye and the sermon itself becomes a rather poor quality of spiritual food. Often such sermons are but little more than moral addresses. In the game of advertising, the minister is apt to become a promoter of the local church rather than a minister of the

gospel, or the pastor of souls. The minister who studies the Scripture and uses his pulpit as a means of holy instruction will announce different subjects and deliver different sermons. A third thing also follows: In the enthusiasm to promote the church, half-truths are told and printed, leaving erroneous impressions. Even false statements creep in where the greatest care is not exercised.

Publicity Ought to be Christian

Publicity must help other churches in order to be Christian. If the advertising of one church detracts from another, there must be something anti-Christian about it, either in motive or consequences. How can one church magnify itself without depressing the cause in another? Just as it has been proven that the majority of our great men come from the smaller colleges, so the fact is that the majority of our Christian leaders come from the smaller con-

gregations. Crowds are no criterion of religion. In fact, rather the reverse. Things that give the least or make their appeal to the lower elements of human nature attract the larger gatherings. Such is true of the prize fight, the foot ball game, moving pictures and others. When a concert in the church is announced, the attendance increases. But this is not essentially religion. But a small proportion of the strangers will return to the same church for a purely spiritual service. Most of our churches attracting crowds have their eye on the count, more than on the Lord.

The Dignity Our Lord Deserves

There is a dignity which we crave for the church of our Lord and a sacredness which we desire of all believers. These somehow rebel against the commercialization of sacred institutions. Religion is that which life and eternity demand. Can a thing so neces-

sary and precious be made more inviting by the commonness of advertising? Does not the so-called advertising impress good-thinking people as with the salesman who presses his wares? The more persistent he is, the more suspicious become his prospective customers of the real worth of the article he is selling. The reputable physician considers it unethical to advertise or promote his cause in any public way. Many of the finest fraternities exist among professional men. Yet a thing so holy as religion we venture to advertise and a fraternity as sacred as the brethren of the ministry is tempted to sacrifice its ethics to advance its own interests.

We do not object to reasonable publicity but we believe the good public is suspicious of the church that leans over to make known every detail of the good it does. It is far better to put our trust in the Lord than in the printer. That printers' ink idea is being worked overtime until people do not

take it seriously. Our great concern is that in our anxiety to bring everybody in, our churches may become simply social centres, and the healing, comforting stream of salvation as the apostles preached and lived it, dry up. In our efforts to make religion popular, we may spread it so thin as to bleach out its color. Religion is a sturdy thing requiring sacrifice and expressive faith.

Religion Should be Restful

The hurry of modern city people who by habit have become practically homeless, requires not that which appeals to their restlessness but the opposite. The church can be of but little help to the world unless it can offer something different. The appeal of religion is today as in the days of Elijah, not in the storm or the lightning, but in the still small voice. We are solicitous for that quiet and godly retreat, where, apart from the hurry

and artificiality of life, men and women may find God, where the soul's one and lasting impression is not the minister or the service, but the beauty and glory of the Saviour.

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